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# Blind Persons' Rights Act

**Q: What is the *Blind Persons' Rights Act*?**

A: The *Blind Persons' Rights Act* ensures that blind people who depend on guide dogs are granted entry to any public place and provided with all services available to the general public.

**Q: What does the Act mean?**

A: Simply, it is an offence to deny access to accommodation to a blind person accompanied by a guide dog or to discriminate against blind people regarding the use of a housing unit.

Further, it prohibits restaurant and hotel operators and cab drivers from refusing service to blind people with guide dogs.

The Act also makes it an offence for any person who is not blind to carry or use a cane or walking stick, that is mostly white, in any public place, thoroughfare or public transportation.

**Q: What happens to those who don't comply with the Act?**

A: Anyone denying access or discriminating against a blind person on the basis of having a guide dog may face a fine of up to \$5,000.

The penalty for unauthorized use of a white cane or walking stick may be a fine of up to \$500.



**Q: What is the purpose of the identification card issued to blind people?**

A: The Act allows the Attorney General or an authorized delegate, to issue an identification card to blind people and their guide dogs. The card is used as proof that the person is entitled to be accompanied by a guide dog.

**Q: How can I obtain an identification card?**

A: You can apply for a card by filling out an application form, available from the Ministry of the Attorney General. For more information, call our general inquiry line at (416) 326-2220. Callers outside Toronto who wish further information on the subject may call collect. Our address is: The Ministry of the Attorney General, 720 Bay Street, Toronto, Ontario M5G 2K1.

**Q: How do I report an offence under this Act?**

A: The police have the responsibility to investigate alleged violations of the *Blind Persons' Rights Act* and to lay charges if necessary. If you believe an offence has been committed, report it to your local police. If charges are filed, the case will be prosecuted by the local Crown Attorney's office. The Ministry of the

Attorney General does not have responsibility for investigating alleged violations of the Act and laying of charges.

Alternatively, you can attend before a justice of the peace to swear an information for the purpose of laying charges for an alleged breach of the Act. A local office of the Ontario Court of Justice can advise when a justice is available.

**Q: What other options do I have, apart from prosecution in court?**

A: You can file a complaint with the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) about alleged discrimination on the basis of disability. The Human Rights Code offers wider protection than the *Blind Persons' Rights Act* against this kind of discrimination.

If you've been denied services in a restaurant, hotel or cab, you may request the local licencing authority to investigate the matter.

You may also contact advocacy groups, such as the **Canadian National Institute for the Blind** at (416) 486-2500 and the **Advocacy Resource Centre for the Handicapped** at (416) 482-8255 to help raise awareness of the Act in the community.

